



## City Council AGENDA REPORT

**DATE:** 03/25/2024

**AGENDA OF:** 04/09/2024

**DEPARTMENT:** City Manager/Public Works

**SUBJECT:** West Cliff 50-year Vision, Grant Application for West Cliff Dr. Pilot (including One-way Vehicle with Dedicated Bike and Pedestrian Lanes), and Lighthouse Point Study (CM/PW)

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**RECOMMENDATION:** Motion to:

- 1) Comment on and adopt the West Cliff 50-year Community Vision;
  - 2) Receive updates on Public Works infrastructure projects related to West Cliff;
  - 3) Adopt a resolution authorizing and directing staff to apply for, accept, and appropriate grant funds for a West Cliff Dr. pilot (Pilot) to test and explore a transportation option that includes one-way vehicle access with dedicated bike and pedestrian lanes and neighborhood traffic calming, in the amount not to exceed \$3.5 million and from the California Active Transportation Program Quick Build Program, a grant program administered by the California Department of Transportation, and authorize the City Manager to execute, in forms approved by the City Attorney, any agreements or amendments necessary for the application and acceptance;
  - 4) Direct staff to return to Council with quantitative and qualitative data from the Pilot at six months after Pilot begins, and every six months thereafter; and
  - 5) Direct staff to complete a geologic hazard analysis and preliminary engineering study for Lighthouse Point.
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**BACKGROUND:** West Cliff Drive between Columbia Street and David Way was severely damaged by large swells during the January 2023 storms, causing portions of the roadway and path to fail, along with impacts to public access points, utility infrastructure, and the surrounding neighborhood. Initial work was focused on emergency protective measures geared toward safety and access. Additionally, community interest in support of accelerated decision-making regarding management of the West Cliff area was activated.

Post-disaster, the City assembled an integrated, citywide team (Team) to holistically address the damage, existing in process work, and development of adjusted next steps as West Cliff is a

cherished public amenity that should be accessible to all for a variety of uses.<sup>1</sup> The extended team also included consulting and engineering partners, regulatory agencies, funders, the community, and community groups.

Over the course of the past year, the Team has coordinated and delivered the following:

- Numerous and substantive “community conversations” (Conversations) including garage meetings, outreach along West Cliff Dr, in person and online community meetings, online surveys and feedback forums, a focus group, a public opinion research poll, a Council Study Session, and Council meeting discussions.
- A three-year post-recover focused roadmap: “A Resilient West Cliff, Accessible to All Roadmap”.
- Funding and approval of infill walls along West Cliff Dr
  - o Walls at 920, 932, 1016, and 1030 West Cliff Dr
  - o Construction began in September 2023 and is slated to be completed in December 2024.
- Bethany Curve
  - o Final design anticipated end of April 2024
  - o Targeted complete construction by end of 2024
- 800 West Cliff
  - o Began coordination with State Parks on determining ownership
  - o Began analysis of repairs options and funding mechanisms
- 960 West Cliff
  - o 2024 sinkhole protection
  - o Qualifying for emergency grant funding
- Sacramento Outfall Repair
  - o Winter 2024 rainfall events decimated the storm drain outfall at Sacramento Ave.
  - o Temporary repair to the pipe and plastic protection was installed to avoid further erosion
  - o Temporary closure of path section. Detour to sidewalk on northside of roadway
  - o Qualifying for emergency grant funding
- Temporary Traffic Control Measures:
  - o Path closure and new crosswalks at Sacramento Ave and Auburn Ave
  - o Path restrictions at 800 West Cliff Dr
  - o Striping and intersection improvements on Delaware Ave between Almar Ave and Surfside Ave
  - o Traffic calming improvements on Almar Ave between West Cliff and Delaware
  - o Speed cushions on Plateau Ave between Woodrow and Almar will be installed in April 2024
  - o Speed bumps and residential access restrictions on Pelton and Clark
  - o Roadway closures on Oxford and Alta between Woodrow and Almar
  - o Intersection modifications at Woodrow Ave and Plateau Ave
  - o Maintained pedestrian, cyclist, and resident access on West Cliff Dr between David Way and Columbia St during construction efforts
- Columbia St to Woodrow Ave One-Way Pilot and Evaluation

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<sup>1</sup> Project related information, related sites to link to, and community outreach information can be found at: <https://www.cityofsantacruz.com/government/city-departments/city-manager/west-cliff>

At the May 23, 2023 Council meeting, Council directed staff to prepare a 50-year vision for West Cliff. This vision was to be community-based and bring to life its aspirations and future uses for West Cliff, considering long-term resource allocations and building disaster resilience.

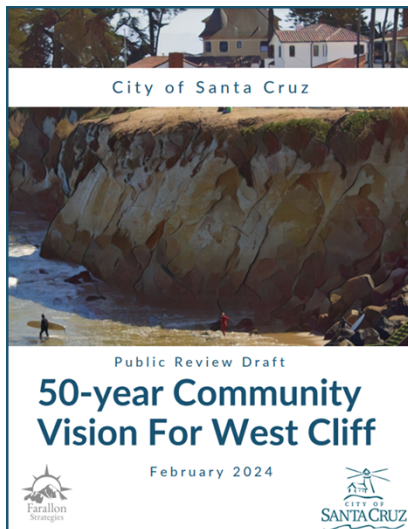
*“Thinking 50 years into the future, and really when I was looking at the vision statement for the Army Corps of Engineers, and it says, ‘Engineering solutions to our nation’s toughest challenges.’ And so I feel like this is one of those things. This is maybe not our nation’s toughest challenge, but it is a local, tough challenge right now that I think is **one that we have a sense of urgency to unite and address.**” (emphasis added)*  
Vice Mayor Renee Golder at May 23, 2023 Council meeting

Using an iterative, data-driven, intensive community outreach-based approach, the Team connected with the community via extensive citywide community meetings, community partner check-ins, Focus Group sessions, and community conversations at Council meetings (including one study session). Prior to March 2024<sup>2</sup>, the City engaged approximately 2,160 touch points through in person and virtual meetings (540 people), surveys (500 people), and public opinion research (1,120 people).

All data from the above are available at:

<https://www.cityofsantacruz.com/government/city-departments/city-manager/west-cliff/community-conversations-resources>

On February 23, 2024, the Team published the West Cliff 50-year Community Vision (Community Vision).



Cover of February 23, 2024 Draft + Artwork to Show Possible Future West Cliff

The full report can be found at:

<https://www.cityofsantacruz.com/government/city-departments/city-manager/west-cliff/50-year-vision-draft>

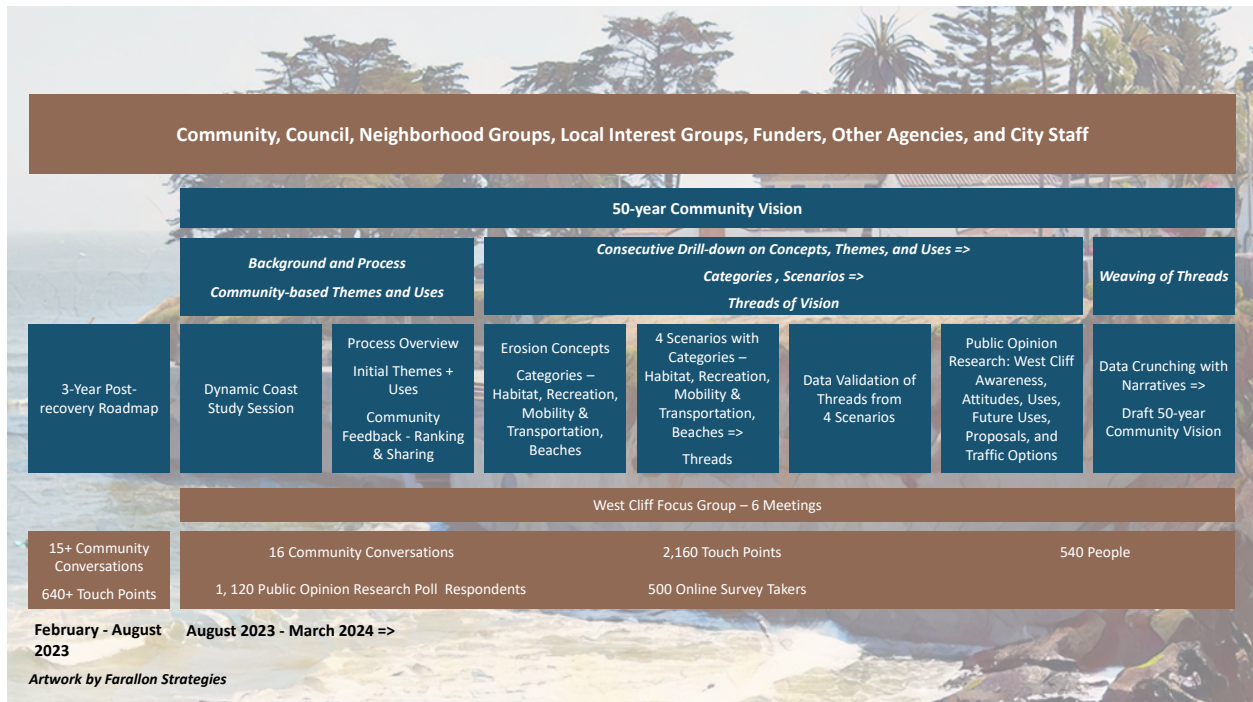
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<sup>2</sup> These connection statistics will significantly increase with comments and feedback for the draft 50-year Community Vision.

## DISCUSSION:

### I. 50-year Community Vision

The eight-month process to develop the 50-year Community Vision was community-based and informed by a broad base of informal and formal opinions, with engaged and passionate conversations amongst City community members, Council, neighborhoods, interest groups, funders, other agencies, City staff, and industry experts.



*Process Steps to Develop 50-year Community Vision, with Highlights of Community Outreach*


Ultimately, the data from the community spoke volumes and drove the 50-year Community Vision.

#### A. Data Sources

As a shared expression of the City’s values for West Cliff, the 50-year Community Vision was woven from common themes that emerged throughout the project as well as the previous one for a Three-year Post-recovery Roadmap. The Team creatively engaged with a broad mix of community members to find common, underlying threads that would make up the woven product.

As interim options to aid in further exploration, the community voices were packaged in four possible scenarios:

1. Natural Feature Restoration
2. Hold the Line
3. Hybrid
4. Park Only

NATURAL FEATURE RESTORATION	HOLD THE LINE	HYBRID	PARK ONLY 
<b>Mobility and Transportation</b> Minor expansion of active transportation Parking maintained as is	Transportation status quo maintained for as long as possible Parking maintained as is	Expansion of active transportation Vehicles use one lane, one way Parking mostly maintained, as feasible	Expansion of active transportation Only vehicle access for emergency response Parking limited to either end of recreation area
<b>Recreation</b> Minor increase of active transportation uses Retained sand would provide additional coastal recreation opportunities Possible increased formal access points on foot built into restoration projects	Active transportation uses are as is Cliff-top recreation maintained Limited informal on foot coastal access Formal access points on foot, built w/ hard armoring solutions	Expansion of active transportation uses Formal access point on foot less constrained by linear infrastructure and can be designed to shift with anticipated coastal erosion	Expansion of active transportation uses Increased formal access points on foot less constrained by linear infrastructure and can be designed to shift with anticipated coastal erosion
<b>Habitat Enhancement</b> Re-establishment of bluff top natural features, such as coastal habitat and plantings where feasible.	Potential for diminished ecological connectivity With intentional design, could bolster ecological function compared to current	Ecological connectivity and habitat restoration improved.	Ecological connectivity and habitat restoration improved and prioritized
<b>Beaches</b> Increased beach areas With installation of offshore reefs, sand may accumulate at a higher rate and restore some beach options. Beach erosion may intensify even with management	Pocket beaches, with attempts at management Beach erosion may intensify even with management	Pocket beaches and beach access maintained by limiting hard armoring Natural erosion will feed beaches with sand	Pocket beaches, but likely less, allowing some natural erosion Access points for beaches would change as erosion occurs Beaches a less robust defense against extreme storms

EROSION

December 5, 2023 Scenarios

These scenarios were not intended to set four specific possibilities for the future. They were vehicles to package aspects of West Cliff – from the following categories:

- Mobility and Transportation
- Recreation
- Habitat Enhancement
- Beaches

Based upon feedback<sup>3</sup> for the aspects under these categories and previous community conversations, the Team determined high priority threads from the community. In January, the data that drove the threads was summarized and presented in an online forum for further community feedback. Additionally, to ensure statistical significance, the City hired EMC Research, a full-service market research and data analytics firm who works with thousands of clients across the country, to do a public opinion research poll of City voters (Poll).

With participation from City Manager’s Office, Climate Action, Public Works, Farallon Strategies, Vice Mayor Golder and Councilmember Kalantari-Johnson, the Poll was drafted with EMC and ran from December 7, 2023 through January 10, 2024. Sent to City randomly selected registered voters via postcard, email, and text messaging, the Poll yielded 1,120 interviews (the Poll’s overall margin of error was ±2.93 percentage points). EMC required a minimum sample size of 350 registered voters (which the community far exceeded) for the results to be representative of the City and for results to be statistically significant.

The Poll was proportional to where voters reside in the City. The “impacted neighbors” area (see map) represents 12% of the responses because 12% of the City’s registered voters reside within

<sup>3</sup> From in person participants at a December 5, 2023 in person community conversation and 200+ online survey respondents.

this area. Similarly, 88% of the responses came from those outside the “impacted neighbors” area because 88% of the City’s registered voters live outside of this area.



*EMC Research Poll – Delineation of Map Boundaries for Impacted Neighbors and Rest of Santa Cruz Voting Community*

The Poll progressed through the following question areas:

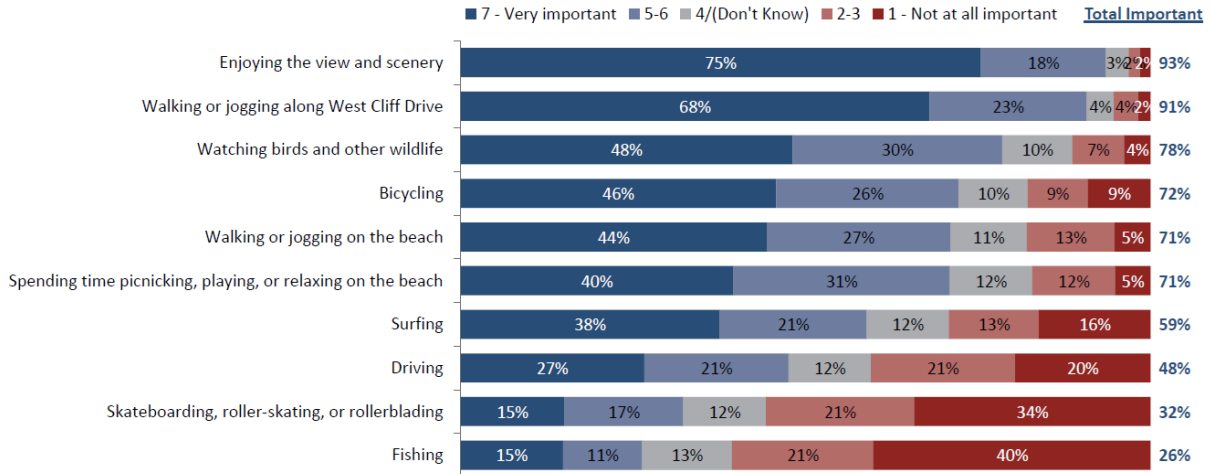
- Issue Environment
- Past West Cliff Usage
- Current West Cliff Usage
- Future West Cliff – Usage and Proposals. The latter had questions areas around:
  - All of West Cliff
  - West Cliff Dr more specifically
- Future Traffic Patterns

Highlights of the EMC results are below, with the full presentation in the attachments (see URL above):

# Future Uses of West Cliff



*When it comes to future uses of West Cliff, enjoying the view and walking or jogging along the road are rated as the most important. Watching wildlife, bicycling, and beach activities including surfing are also important to majorities.*



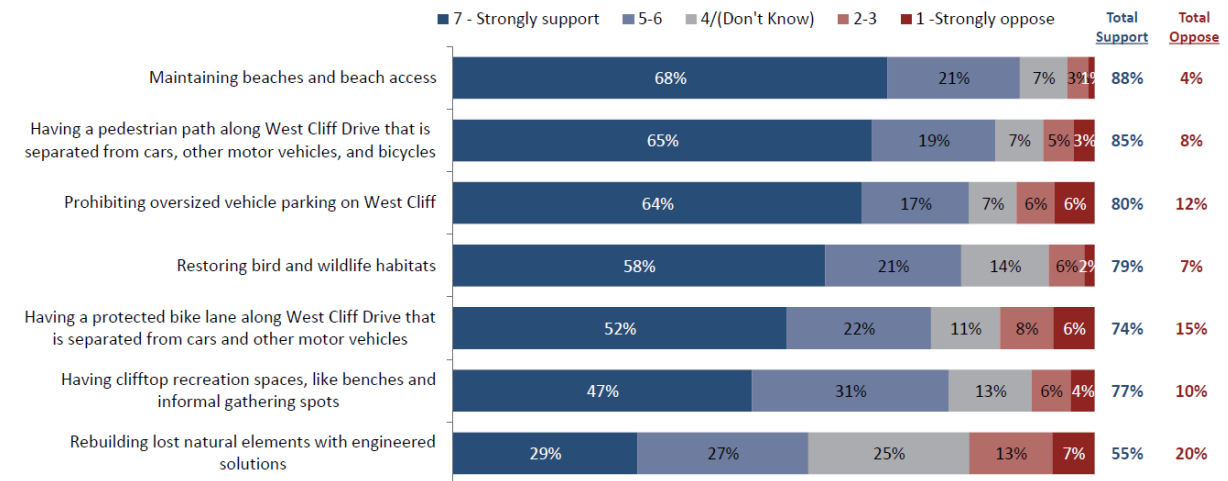
Q6-15. First, you will read a list of ways that West Cliff Drive and the surrounding area could be used in the future. For each one, please indicate how important that use is to you.

23-9132 West Cliff Survey | 14

# Future Proposals for West Cliff



*Maintaining beach access is the most broadly-supported potential future element, followed by a separate pedestrian path and prohibiting oversized vehicle parking.*



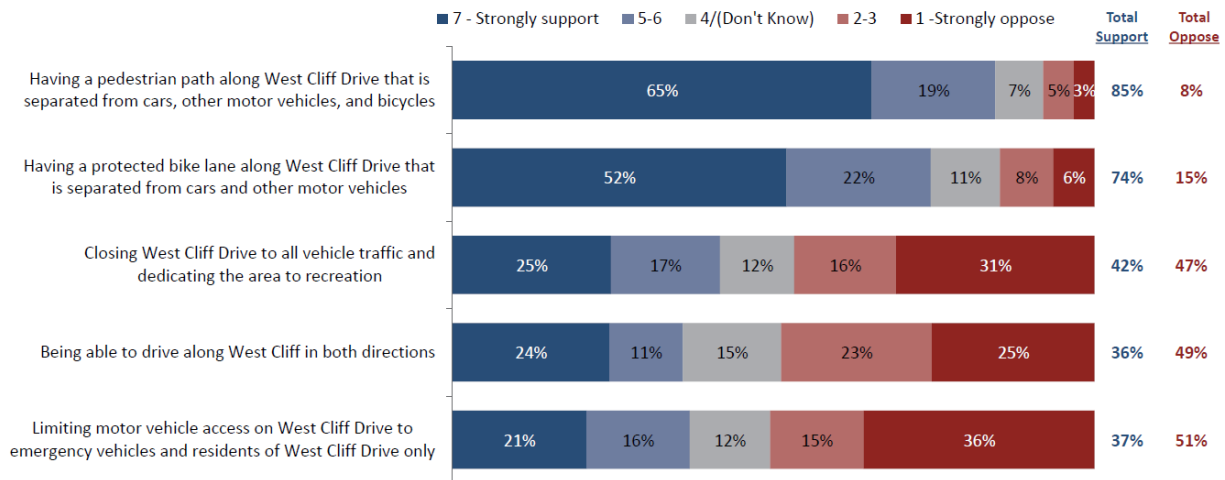
Q16-30. Next, you will see a list of items that some people have proposed could be a part of the future of West Cliff. For each one, please indicate whether you support or oppose that proposal.

23-9132 West Cliff Survey | 15

# Future Proposals: West Cliff Drive



*Proposals to have a separate pedestrian path and a protected bike lane see strong support, while voters are more split over other road-related proposals.*



Q16-30. Next, you will see a list of items that some people have proposed could be a part of the future of West Cliff. For each one, please indicate whether you support or oppose that proposal.

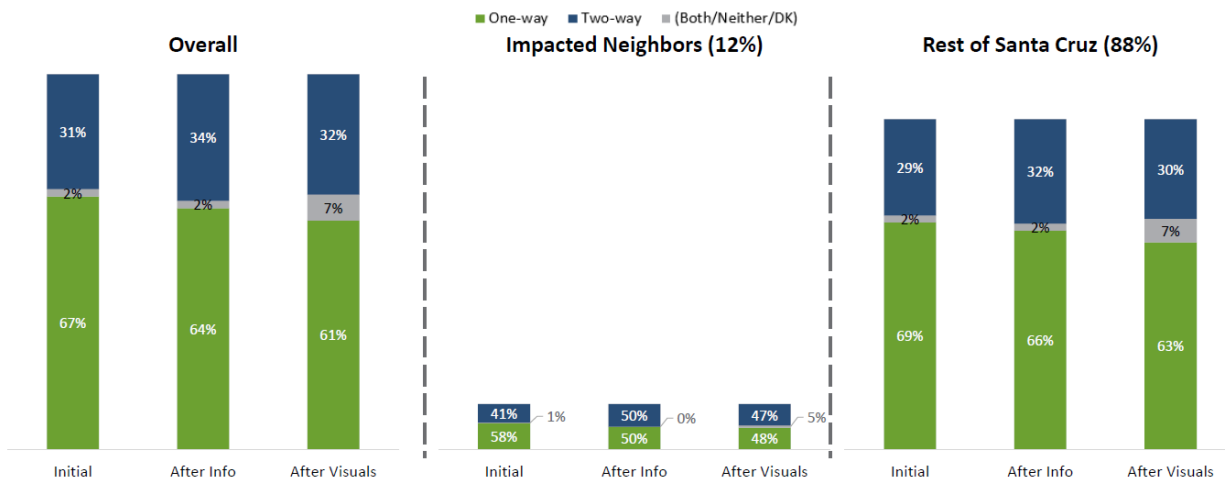
23-9132 West Cliff Survey | 17

The uses and proposals then led to a Future Traffic Patterns section that enquired on two traffic concepts – one-way and two-way. The original questions about two-way vs. one-way concepts were then followed by open questions about likes and concerns, and a final forced choice yielded the following:

# Final Forced Choice



*After considering both visuals, a strong majority continue to prefer one-way vehicle access overall, but Impacted Neighbors are divided, and a larger share decline to make a choice between the two options.*



Impacted Neighbors and Rest of Santa Cruz shown proportionally Q34/35/42. Given everything you've read and seen, please indicate which of the following is closer to your opinion

23-9132 West Cliff Survey | 36

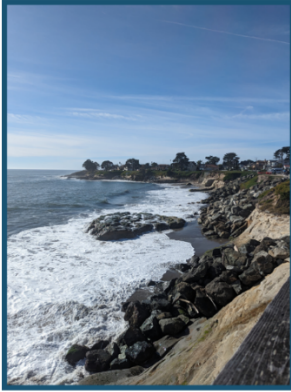


## **B. Top Threads and the Pillars of the 50-year Community Vision**

The most expressed thread from the community from the events and surveys was the prioritization of bike and pedestrian access, followed by beach access, environmental and habitat concerns given our dynamic coast, and the need for additional traffic control measures.

These community-based priorities became the 9 pillars for the 50-year Community Vision:

**Balancing Change and a Collective Future**



**Beauty, Resilience, and Continued Uses**



**Prioritizing Pedestrian and Bicycle Access**



**One-way Vehicle Access and Additional Traffic Control**



**Limited Hard Armoring**



**Exploring Nature-based Solutions and Engineered Natural Feature Restoration**



**Park Space as Recreation Area and Buffer**



**Planned Relocation**



**Collaboration**



Details for each area are in the draft 50-year Community Vision.

### **C. Community Feedback for Draft 50-year Community Vision**

The City released the draft of the 50-year Community Vision on February 23, 2024, along with a corresponding online survey where the community was invited to share their feedback.

The community provided feedback via an in-person community conversation on February 29th. Additionally, the City received 354 responses to the online survey when the survey closed on March 13, 2024. A few examples of feedback include:

- Desire for additional details on the Sustainability and Resilience Committee
- Requests for additional traffic calming measures in specific areas
- Requests for a commitment from the City to work with those residing on the Lower Westside

All of the above comments, along with many others, were reflected in the updated 50-year Community Vision or in this agenda report.

### **D. Other Recommendations and Next Steps**

**Sustainability and Resilience Committee.** The 50-year Community Vision work was very positively impacted and could not have been done without the combination of ad hoc community participation as well as the on-going, in-depth critical analysis and comment from the diverse West Cliff Focus Group (Focus Group). West Cliff and other climate impacted areas – beaches, San Lorenzo River, etc. – of the City would benefit greatly from such candid, consistent review of draft work.

Based upon this, the Team is recommending that an on-going group be formed to act as a advisory sounding board and review point for not just West Cliff, but broader City work in other areas impacted by resiliency and sustainability issues that require stewardship under the rapidly changing world of climate change.

**Updates.** Every ten years, the City must update its Local Coastal Program (LCP). Knowing that the 50-year Community Vision needs to evolve under the changing conditions of the dynamic coast, the City should leverage the LCP update cadence to efficiently share resources and community conversations and make necessary content synchronizations. This does not preclude the need for more frequent updates for the 50-year Community Vision should conditions warrant them – be it impactful changes in jurisdictional, regulatory, environmental, or financial bounds.

**Roadmap and Other Plans.** The 50-year Community Vision guides decisions in all policy, program, and project documents. The City will engage the community and work across departments and partners to implement the Vision and improve resilience along West Cliff through A Resilient West Cliff Accessible to All Roadmap (Roadmap). Adopted in August 2023, the Roadmap will need to be further updated based upon the 50-year Community Vision, specifically beyond its first three-year post-recovery focus. Additionally, the City must continue to deliver on regulatory documents that impact West Cliff – the LCP, the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, and other coastal policies.

**From Vision to Action.** The Council and community jointly called on the City to take stances and actions to have hopes of saving a beloved and iconic part of Santa Cruz.

To re-iterate key direction for this project:

*“Thinking 50 years into the future, and really when I was looking at the vision statement for the Army Corps of Engineers, and it says, ‘Engineering solutions to our nation’s toughest challenges.’ And so I feel like this is one of those things. This is maybe not our nation’s toughest challenge, but it is a local, tough challenge right now that I think is **one that we have a sense of urgency to unite and address.**” (emphasis added)*

*Vice Mayor Renee Golder at May 23, 2023 Council meeting*

In response to the draft document:

*“The City’s 50-year vision for West Cliff Drive is a key visioning step towards advancing longer term adaptation planning for bicyclists, pedestrians, vehicles, beachgoers, and other users of this critical segment of the California Coastal Trail, beloved by residents and visitors from across California and the globe. We would like to commend this City for responding to the storms with momentum and drive, and for producing a draft “50-year Community Vision for West Cliff” that acknowledges the difficult choices and trade-offs integral to coastal adaptation and resiliency planning.”*

*Kevin Kahn, Central Coast District Manager, California Coastal Commission  
March 15, 2024 Letter*

Adopting the 50-year Community Vision is a critical action moving the City toward preserving a future West Cliff for generations to come. As was acknowledged in the feedback around the “Hold the Line” scenario, constant rebuilding West Cliff as it now stands is not sustainable. Moving toward the changes that the community spoke about through the 50-year Community Vision moves the City toward a potentially sustainable future version of West Cliff.

Therefore, additional next steps in using the pillars of the 50-year Community Vision are recommended as follows:

- Implement a pilot to test a West Cliff transportation corridor with dedicated lanes for bicycles, pedestrians, and one-lane of vehicles.
- Study and develop mitigation recommendations for Lighthouse Point.

These tangible next steps align with the 50-year Community Vision in these ways:

50-year Community Vision Pillar	Dedicated Bike, Pedestrian, One-way Pilot	Engineering Study of Lighthouse Point
Balancing Change and a Collective Future	X	X
Beauty, Resilience and Continued Uses	X	X
Prioritizing Pedestrian and Bicycle Access	X	X
One-way Vehicle Access and Additional Traffic Control	X	
Limited Hard Armoring		X
Exploring Nature-based Solutions and Engineered Natural Feature Restoration		X
Park Space as Recreation Area and Buffer	X	X
Planned Relocation		X (Road)
Collaboration	X	X

## ***II. Transportation and Grant Application***

The Team seeks Council approval to submit a funding request to the Caltrans Active Transportation Quick Build program for a West Cliff One-way Pilot program (Pilot). The pilot approach is used when testing out a concept and calls for informed adjustments and better next steps in response to a pilot's data collection.

Active Transportation refers to human forms of transportation - in particular, walking and bicycling. The Pilot aligns with other City Active Transportation work, and would bring many key aspects of the 2017 Active Transportation Plan to this area of the City. It would improve multimodal mobility, increase safety for people walking and biking, and increase the number of people using non-auto forms of travel.

The intent of this funding request is to construct a one-way transportation corridor as called for in the 50-year Community Vision by utilizing quick build materials designed to be able to be adjusted during a pilot period as needed. Quick build materials are designed to be temporary - a more flexible approach than traditional infrastructure.

The pilot period would run for a period of two years with programmed check in points every six months at Council at which time staff would provide analytical updates and potential options for improvement. At the end of the two-years, staff would seek Council direction to maintain or remove the Pilot.

### **A. Pilot Description and Duration**

In order to collect, measure, and analyze empirical transportation and user data around the pillars of "Prioritizing Pedestrian and Bicycle Access" and "One-way Vehicle Access and Additional Traffic Controls", the Team recommends pursuit of a grant via the Active Transportation Program Quick Build program (Quick Build). The application is due in June 2024 with award announcements anticipated in December 2024. The schedule for implementation would align with completion of the Bethany Culvert, anticipated by fall 2025, in order to allow for continuous travel along the entire West Cliff Dr corridor (Corridor).

The West Cliff Dr One-way Pilot grant application will request funding to implement a one-way westbound roadway between Bay Street and Swanton Boulevard. The existing eastbound automobile lane would be converted to a two-way protected bicycle facility. The existing multiuse path would become a pedestrian only facility.

In order to address the travel changes in the entire study area, this grant would also include traffic calming tools within the surrounding neighborhood. These tools would be from the adopted City of Santa Cruz Traffic Calming Toolbox. A preliminary plan of these elements is included as "West Cliff Drive – Initial Traffic Calming Features".

The Quick Build grant program is designed to test projects similar to the West Cliff project. Specific to this funding source, the intention is to allow for flexibility in implementing new ideas, recognizing that they may need to be modified during the pilot as data is gathered and new tools tested. During the two-year pilot time period, there will be regular touchpoints for engagement. The evaluation criteria set forth in the next section will inform pilot changes.

## **B. Pilot Evaluation Criteria**

The grant application for the Pilot will include multiple avenues for evaluation and iteration. These are planned to include vehicular volume and speed along the Corridor and within the study area, multimodal user counts on the Corridor, and public opinion poll research.

As part of the measurement and iterative nature of the funding source, staff would commit to addressing vehicular traffic volume concerns in the study area should local roads exceed 1,000 vehicles per day or if the 85th percentile speed exceeds 25 miles per hour on routes with substantial changes in traffic and prioritize implementation based on the measured impacts within the allowable funding. Tools used to address these impacts would come from the adopted Traffic Calming Toolkit.

## ***III. Lighthouse Point Hazard Analysis and Engineering Study***

Zone 3 of West Cliff Dr includes Lighthouse Point and contains seven different coastal armoring structures and ten areas of erosion concern. Within the next ten years, three areas of erosion concern are identified as high-risk erosion likely to impact the Recreational Trail and/or West Cliff Dr. These include a substantial sea cave at Lighthouse Point that could affect the Lighthouse, existing seawall, access points, and surf break. In addition, several undercuts could likely undermine portions of the Recreational Trail. Four of the areas of erosion concern are deemed high hazard, and if they erode, would likely affect the Recreational Trail, parking, and potentially West Cliff Dr (Figure 3-3) below. In addition to the threats described above, recent dramatic bluff failures have occurred in popular access and use points to the Steamers Lane surf break, highlighting the unpredictable nature of coastal erosion.

Building on the work completed in 2021, the Lighthouse Point study would evaluate potential hazards and threats created by ongoing bluff erosion and undermining by the known sea cave, and explore potential mitigation strategies and engineering solutions. This would include the application of engineered and nature-based solutions to preserve and protect existing infrastructure, formal and informal recreational access and use areas, and address safety issues associated with bluff fracture and deposition into surf break areas. The study will also seek to define how ongoing encroachment of the existing sea cave will impact the Lighthouse/surfing museum, as well as associated surf breaks. The study area would focus on the segment of coastline from the eastern edge of ITs beach to the eastern end of the parking area by Lighthouse Point recreation area.

The estimated cost to complete the hazard analysis and preliminary design is \$150,000. To proceed, a new general fund appropriation would be required. If directed to proceed with the study, Public Works will include a general fund request of \$150,000 for an existing project *West Cliff Resiliency and Accessibility (c402305)* as part of the proposed FY 2025 Capital Investment Program budget. Professional services would be procured through a qualifications-based selection process, and the study would likely take 9-14 months to complete.



Figure 3-3. Priority areas for adaptation and management in Zone 3.

Source: Figure 3-3 West Cliff Drive Adaptation and Management Plan

**IV. Policy Applicability**

In addition to the Active Transportation Plan and Climate Action 2030 relevancy, the 50-year Community Vision has strong ties the City’s 2019 Health in All Policies (HiAP) program. HiAP recognizes the City's role in supporting community well-being through policy and decision making by prioritizing three pillars: equity, public health, and sustainability. Delivering equitable access is critical to HiAP, as is continuing equitable community engagement. The 50-year Community Vision would also enact decision making parameters for sustainability via its focus on balancing change, resilience, limited hard armoring, and exploration of nature-based solutions and natural feature restoration. Active transportation (pedestrian and bicycle use) in the 50-year Community Vision further epitomizes sustainability and public health.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

- Adoption of 50-year Community Vision - none.
- For the Pilot to test a West Cliff transportation corridor with dedicated lanes for bicycles, pedestrians, and one-lane of vehicles, the grant budget is in process and anticipated not to exceed \$3,500,000. No match is required for this fund source and there would be no impact to the General Fund.
- The Lighthouse Point Hazard Analysis and Engineering Study would be \$150,000 from the General Fund’s Capital Investment Program in FY 2025.

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City Manager

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. WEST CLIFF ONE-WAY PILOT RESOLUTION
2. PILOT SAMPLE APPLICATION
3. INITIAL TRAFFIC CALMING FEATURES
4. CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION COMMENT LETTER